



March 19, 2013

The Honorable Lisa Posthumus Lyons, Chair
House Education Committee
Michigan House of Representatives
S-1190 Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Chairwoman Lyons:

On behalf of the Foundation for Excellence in Education, I write today in support of Michigan's current efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards.

These standards are rigorous, fewer and deeper in nature. They will challenge students to read, write and solve math problems at greater capacity, raise the bar for all students and better prepare them for the globally competitive job market and economy. The standards do not dictate what textbooks must be used or how a school's curriculum should be developed, but they will result in better, more accurate assessments to gauge student learning.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping states transform education, the Foundation shares your Committee's belief that great teachers and leaders are key to driving student achievement. We do not believe in top-down mandates from Washington, but do believe that state-driven efforts such as the Common Core State Standards will provide better information about what works and ultimately strengthen – rather than detract from – local control.

There are some stakeholders who tend to see Common Core as regulatory over-reach. On the contrary, these standards will actually open the door to de-regulation. Since there are currently no common standards or accountability assessments across states, it is difficult for policymakers to identify best practices. This unfortunately drives Washington bureaucrats to develop a thick set of programs with their own funding streams, rules and regulations because no one is sure what policies are actually working. Meanwhile, American students fall behind their peers globally.

In the same way that smart phones have created a baseline for technology applications that can improve lives, common standards can likewise open the door to innovation by breaking down barriers. An educator in northwest Ohio will be able to travel to a great school in Ann Arbor for professional development, because the underlying standards from which their colleagues are

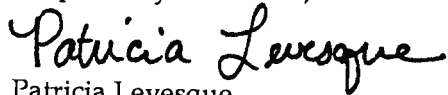
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teaching will no longer be different. Teacher training programs will have more comparable data across state lines. Diplomas will be more meaningful to colleges and employers, in Michigan and across the country. Mobile students in Detroit will have less disruption when their family moves across town—either out of necessity or by choice.

Michigan is embarking upon difficult but long-overdue conversations regarding how to recognize great teaching and provide school performance information that parents can understand. We hope to be in a position to praise Michigan's student-centered efforts in the coming years as you and your colleagues work to improve education for all students in your state. Staying the course on common, rigorous standards will only help our ability to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Levesque". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Patricia Levesque
Chief Executive Officer